



# NEWS RELEASE

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## DCA Sting Nabs Unlicensed Locksmiths Working in the Bay Area

*Four suspects cited; 2 more cases considered by San Francisco District Attorney*

SACRAMENTO -- As many as six people could face criminal prosecution as a result of a wide-ranging investigation by the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) targeting unlicensed locksmiths in the Bay Area.

DCA's Division of Investigation (DOI), working with the help of the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, capped the three-month investigation with a series of undercover stings in late July and early August that nabbed four suspected unlicensed locksmith companies.

"Because of the nature of locksmithing, unlicensed activity by locksmiths is especially risky to consumers," said DCA Director Charlene Zettel. "But unlicensed activity of any kind also rips off law-abiding business people who have to deal with unfair competition."

"We are committed to working with the Department of Consumer Affairs to ensure that people who work as locksmiths without the required license and background check are prosecuted," said San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris. "These cases send a message to consumers to make sure they know that the locksmiths they hire are licensed before calling them out to their home or office."

Cited in the stings were:

- **Gregory Bork** of Brisbane, CA -- an employee of Ames Locksmith Co. (aka Ames Locksmith and Security Inc.), San Francisco, CA.

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- **Yotam Froom** of El Cerrito, CA -- owner of Captain Locks, El Cerrito, CA; and an employee of Mr. Locks Inc. (aka Giant Security Inc. and Vertex Security Inc.), New York, NY, and Dependable Locks Inc. (aka Superb Solutions Inc.), Bronx, NY.
- **Nadav Rosenblum** of San Francisco, CA -- an employee of A-1 Emergency Locksmith (aka The Emergency Service, Aalbion 24 Hour Service and AABay 24 Hour Locksmith), San Francisco, CA
- **Ronnie Run Hao Liu** of San Francisco, CA -- Associated with Davis Duong Locksmith, San Francisco, CA. Liu's relationship to the business is not known.

All four were issued Notices to Appear for unlicensed practice as a locksmith, a misdemeanor criminal violation of the State's Business and Professions Code. If convicted, they could receive as much as a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. The San Francisco District Attorney's Office is reviewing cases against two other individuals.

During the course of its investigation, DOI uncovered a dozen locksmith companies belonging to five individuals whose owners, while licensed, were operating under a name not registered with DCA's Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS), which regulates locksmiths in California. While technically violations of state rules, those cases will be dealt with administratively.

The investigation was launched after BSIS, reacting to a request for assistance from the San Francisco DA's Office and a rash of consumer complaints, opened several cases surrounding the activities of a Bronx, NY-based company, Priceline, in the San Francisco area. As a result, Priceline lost its California locksmith license as part of a negotiated settlement with DCA in July for performing work in the Bay Area using unlicensed workers. One of the people cited in the recent undercover operations, Yotam Froom, is connected to Priceline, which shares the same Bronx, NY, address as Dependable Locks and Superb Solutions.

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During its investigation, BSIS identified more than a dozen telephone numbers and business names advertising locksmith services on the Internet that did not appear to be licensed. DOI, the division that handles criminal investigations for DCA, then took over the probe, developing the probable cause necessary to subpoena telephone records from various land and cellular phone service providers, some of which were no longer operating in California nor subject to state disclosure laws. As a result, it took more than two months to obtain the information necessary to identify all the people associated with the businesses.

Investigators from DOI's Hayward office then conducted stings over several days. On July 21, an undercover DOI investigator brought several locksets to Davis Duong Locksmith in San Francisco for rekeying. After determining the business was operating illegally, the investigator cited Ronnie Run Hao Liu.

Another, more elaborate operation was mounted July 27, July 31 and August 1, when investigators invited targeted locksmiths to change the interior locks of a vacant San Francisco office. In all, five businesses responded. Three were cited.

Bureau of Security and Investigative Services Chief Paul Johnson said he was thrilled by the results of the investigation.

"By working together, the Department of Consumer Affairs and the San Francisco District Attorney's Office have put unlicensed locksmiths on notice that they will not be tolerated," Johnson said.

He urged consumers to be sure to check the licenses of any locksmith company or employee that they employ to make sure they are legitimate. Consumers can check licenses by calling DCA's Consumer Information Center at (800) 952-5210 or by visiting its Web site at [www.dca.ca.gov](http://www.dca.ca.gov).

The Bureau of Security and Investigative Services licenses locksmiths, security guards, private patrol operators, private investigators, alarm company operators and repossession agencies, and certifies their training facilities and instructors.

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